

NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



WHITLOCK NAMED NEW VETERANS AFFAIRS SECRETARY

Governor-elect Kristi Noem announced that Greg Whitlock will join her administration as Secretary for Veterans Affairs.

"The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs should operate as a rally point, providing resources, support, and guidance to the state's 65,000 veterans," said Governor-elect Noem. "Greg Whitlock is a proven champion for veterans and brings with him a real-life perspective of issues South Dakota veterans face every day. Greg has lived a life of service and patriotism, he leads by example, and he shares my vision for the future of South Dakota veteran care. I'm grateful to have him on my team, and I look forward to the ways we will work together to prioritize South Dakota's bravest men and women."

"I want to thank Governor-elect Noem for the opportunity to continue serving South Dakota veterans and their families," said Greg Whitlock. "I've dedicated my life to serving our country and state, and I'm honored to join Governor-elect Noem's vision to expand employment opportunities and improve customer service for the people who've selflessly defended freedom."

Whitlock, a Selby native, has served in the South Dakota Army National Guard since 1975. A decorated serviceman, he's received numerous accolades including two Meritorious Service Medals, four Army Commendation Medals, four Army Achievement Medals, an Iraq Campaign Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Whitlock served as the military and veterans service representative for Noem's congressional office, and was influential in advocating for an East River veteran's cemetery and fought to preserve the Hot Springs VA Hospital.

Whitlock currently resides in Watertown with his wife, Michelle. They have four children – Ryan, Will, Jake, and Hannah – and one grandson, Caiden.



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INSIDE TOWN HALL FEATURES PROGRAM ON STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

South Dakota's State Veterans Cemetery was the focus of the *Inside Town Hall* program last week. You can view the program by clicking on the link below:

<http://www.siouxfalls.org/innov-tech/Cablecast/cablecast-video-vertical-list/Inside-Town-Hall>

Inside Town Hall is a half-hour interview program designed to focus on current Sioux Falls City Council initiatives and City projects, operations, or future plans of public interest.

The objectives of Inside Town Hall are to increase awareness of the activities and deliberations of the City Council; provide information to the citizens of Sioux Falls on its services, facilities, functions, operations, and future plans of the City; and provide local government news not generally available through the existing broadcast media.

Participants included Sioux Falls City Commissioner Rick Kiley, SD Veterans Council President Terry Paulsen and Vice President Ken Teunissen and SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman.



SUPPORT SIOUXLAND SOLDIERS

Support Siouxland Soldiers hosted their 11th Annual Holidays for Heroes Event on Thursday, Dec. 13 at Liberty Elementary in Sioux City. This is a free holiday event for veterans and military families and includes a holiday meal, groceries, gifts, clothing, rock painting, a resource fair and music!

SDDVA's Program Manager Erin Bultje was on scene to provide veterans with information on benefits and services available to them.

Support Siouxland Soldiers began in 2007 and has:

- Provided 5,500 care-packages to the Siouxland deployed troops
- Served 2,500 hot meals for veterans and their families each year
- Provided 150,000 pounds of groceries and food assistance
- Host 24 support events each year
- Host monthly free *Waffles for Warriors* events, and
- Provide Christmas gifts and dinners to over 600 veterans and military families each year.

You can learn more about Support Siouxland Soldiers at: <http://supportsiouxlandsoldiers.com>.



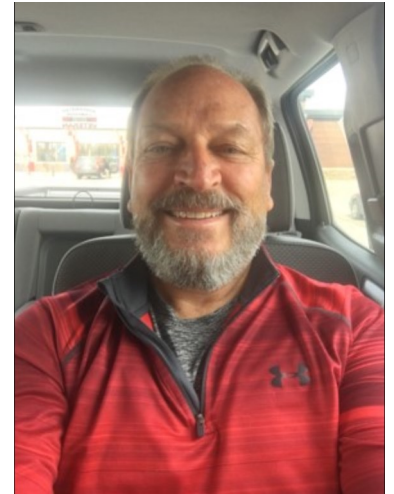
SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN'S NEXT OPERATION

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman has accepted a position with Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity in Rapid City. He will serve as their outreach coordinator. We are sure there will be many missions/operations ahead for BHAFH!

Zimmerman would love to stay in touch with all of the friends he has made during his tenure at SDDVA. His new cell phone number is 605-787-2226 and his email address is:

zimmerman0154@gmail.com.

Thanks for the ride! You have touched the lives of thousands of veterans! You have taken us on a journey we will never forget!



GIVING VETERANS A HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER

A couple of special Santas in northeast South Dakota provided a special holiday luncheon for veterans. Geri Opsal, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate TVSO, and Angela Beacom, Roberts County VSO, hosted a wonderful holiday meal for veterans in their county and presented them with a wonderful t-shirt.

Placemats for the event were designed and decorated by elementary students in the community with great "thank you for your service" messages.

Geri and Angela took a moment out of the program to thank each other for their service and their cooperative spirit.

Kudos and hats off to Geri and Angela for their commitment and dedication to our heroes!!!!!!



YANKTON WORLD WAR II VETERAN AWARDED BRONZE STAR MEDAL POSTHUMOUSLY

Last weekend U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) presented the Bronze Star Medal to Yankton resident Mrs. Lucille Mjoen on behalf of her late husband, World War II Veteran Private First Class Gilbert Mjoen. The Bronze Star was awarded to Mjoen for meritorious achievement in active ground combat against the enemy on Dec. 19, 1944, in Holland, where he was wounded while serving with the 104th Infantry Division. He previously received the Purple Heart and the Good Conduct Medal.

"It's my honor to present the Bronze Star to Mrs. Mjoen on behalf of her husband, Gilbert," said Rounds. "Like so many members of the Greatest Generation, Gilbert was called to serve our nation during World War II. He joined the Army in 1943 and fought in Holland, Belgium and Germany. We are forever grateful to Gilbert for the sacrifices he made to preserve freedom here in the United States and around the world. I wish that Gilbert could be here to accept the



award today, surrounded by his family and friends."

Mjoen was born on January 30, 1925, in Volin, SD. In 1943, after graduating high school, he joined the U.S. Army's 104th Infantry Division. He was a first gunner on the light machine gun squad and the 50-caliber machine gun. He fought in the European Theatre of Operations, specifically in Holland, Belgium and Germany.

SOUTH DAKOTA TVSO'S HONOR SDDVA SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

South Dakota Tribal Veterans Service Officers presented SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman with a star quilt last week during the TVSO Credit Boot Camp in Rapid City.

The boot camp objective was to help veteran service providers expand their understanding of credit and to share resources available to veterans regarding homeownership.

The boot camp was sponsored by the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

Created in 2013, the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition is a diverse group of agencies, institutions, and organizations that works to increase homeownership opportunities for South Dakota's Native people to build strong and healthy communities. The stakeholders include approximately 75 representatives of South Dakota's tribes, federal and state agencies, the South Dakota's Governor's Office, tribally designated housing entities (TDHEs), nonprofit organizations, housing developers, lenders, and community development financial institutions.



TVSOs present Star Quilt to Secretary Zimmerman.



Manaja Hill, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe VSO shares message with SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman.





U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Patient Centered Care and
Cultural Transformation

Veterans and a support person are invited to attend *Intro to Whole Health*

This course is designed to introduce you to VA's Whole Health approach to care.

- You will learn how your strengths and abilities combined with our programs and services can help you improve your health and well-being.
- Our number one goal is to help you to live your life to the fullest.

What is Whole Health?

It focuses on your values and goals regarding your health and well-being. This may include self-care and therapies such as acupuncture, massage, yoga, etc., along with your usual medical care.

- Whole Health helps support your unique answer to the question, "What would you do if your health were the best it could be?"
- Whole Health goes beyond your illnesses, injuries, or disabilities.

**Date and Time: The third Saturday of each month
from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Location: Sioux Falls Vet Center, 3200 W 49th St,
Sioux Falls, SD 57106**

For questions and more information, contact:

Connie Denevan, Whole Health Coordinator, at 605-336-3230, extension 9-7736



VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Sioux Falls Whole Health Care System

ADDITIONAL CHANGES MADE ON MJFSVH CAMPUS

Along with the construction of the new state veterans home, many repair and replacement projects have been completed.

Repairs were made to grand staircase and retaining wall in Building II, new shop building was constructed and state gas pumps were relocated and replaced. Photo to the right shows the first state employee utilizing the new gas pump on the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home campus.



2019 SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 94th Session of the South Dakota Legislature will convene at approximately 1:00 pm on Tuesday, January 8, 2019, with Governor Noem's first State of the State Address. This year's session is scheduled for 40 legislative days, with the main run concluding March 13. March 29 is reserved for considering gubernatorial vetoes.

Legislative Research Council's website can be viewed at:

<http://sdlegislature.gov/>

Legislative bills can be viewed at:


http://sdlegislature.gov/Legislative_Session/Bills/Default.aspx?Session=2019

The legislative calendar can be found on the next page or at:

http://sdlegislature.gov/Legislative_Session/Meetings.aspx?Session=2019

There are 105 legislators—35 in the Senate and 70 in the House of Representatives. Governor Elect Noem has two vacated seats to fill.



94th SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION CALENDAR2019  40 Legislative Days

Please refer to the Joint Rules, Chapter 17 for complete information.

	Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
January 2019			1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8 Session Opens 12 Noon (CST) State of the State L.D. 1	9 State of the Judiciary L.D. 2	10 State of the Tribes L.D. 3	11 L.D. 4	12
	13	14 Executive orders filed (Constitution, Art. IV, Sec. 8) L.D. 5	15 L.D. 6	16 Jt. Memorial Service 3:00 pm L.D. 7	17 Concurrent Resolution limited introduction deadline (J.R. 6B-3) L.D. 8	18	19
	20	21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	22 L.D. 9	23 L.D. 10	24 L.D. 11	25 Last day for unlimited bill & joint resolution introduction (J.R. 6B-3) Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session. L.D. 12	26
	Jan 27	Jan 28 All bill draft requests due in LRC (J.R. 6A-5) L.D. 13	Jan 29 L.D. 14	Jan 30 Last day for introduction of individual bills and joint resolutions Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session. L.D. 15	Jan 31 Last day for introduction of committee bills and joint resolutions Must be at the front desk TWO HOURS prior to session. L.D. 16	Feb 1	2
	3	4 L.D. 17	5 L.D. 18	6 L.D. 19	7 L.D. 20	8	9
	10	11 L.D. 21	12 L.D. 22	13 L.D. 23	14 Last day for JCA selection of general fund revenue targets (J.R. 7-11.1) L.D. 24	15	16
	17	18 Presidents' Day	19 L.D. 25	20 Last day to use J.R. 5-17 L.D. 26	21 L.D. 27	22 Last day to move required delivery of bills or resolutions by a committee to the house of origin L.D. 28	23
	Feb 24	Feb 25 Last day to pass bills or joint resolutions by the house of origin Last day for introduction of concurrent resolutions L.D. 29	Feb 26 L.D. 30	Feb 27 Last day for JCA to move required delivery of special appropriation and property sale bills to house of origin L.D. 31	Feb 28 Last day for house of origin to pass special appropriation and property sale bills delivered by JCA L.D. 32	Mar 1	2
	3	4 Last day for introduction of commemorations L.D. 33	5 J.R. 5-13 in effect L.D. 34	6 Last day to move required delivery of bills or joint resolutions by a committee to the second house L.D. 35	7 Last day for a bill or joint resolution to pass both houses L.D. 36	8	9
	10	11 L.D. 37	12 L.D. 38	13 L.D. 39	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
March 2019	24/31	25	26	27	28	29 Reserved for consideration of gubernatorial vetoes L.D. 40	30

VBA ADJUSTS VETERAN SIGNALS SURVEY OF EDUCATION BENEFICIARIES

The VA has announced that it will adjust its Veteran Signals survey of education beneficiaries schedule to ensure thorough analysis of its recently completed 2018 survey.

In 2018, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), conducted a Veteran Signals (VSignals) survey of Education beneficiaries. More than 23,000 beneficiaries were surveyed, and VBA received over 2,000 responses. VBA is reviewing the results of the survey and exploring process improvements based on the results. This survey cycle is complete.

A new education survey is scheduled to deploy in early 2020, in conjunction with the implementation of the remaining Forever GI Bill® provisions.

VBA suspended the Veterans Signal Education Service survey for 2019 while it analyzes the 2018 results, develops an internal service recovery plan, refines the instrument, and ensures appropriate resourcing.

This suspension corresponds to the period of time in which VBA will complete the implementation of the Forever GI Bill®. This ensures that the new survey instrument incorporates the veterans experience with the complete Forever GI Bill® benefits.

“Rest assured the VBA continues to listen actively and often to Veterans on the department’s important education issues through various venues, including a dedicated call center where we receive approximately 10,000 calls per day,” said VA Acting Deputy Secretary Jim Byrne.

“Our customer service agents handle these calls and help Veterans with their education claims and issues. We listen to Veterans and address their concerns in real time. We have found that this is the most efficient and expeditious way to handle Veterans’ issues.”

VBA also obtains feedback from Congress and VSOs, including VSOs whose primary mission is in the education arena, through monthly meetings.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 24-25—State Offices Closed

Dec 31—Jan 1—State Offices Closed

Jan 8—Governor's State of the State—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)

Jan 8—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)

Jan 13-18—VFW Accredited Service Officer Training—Annapolis, MD

Jan 18—Sioux Falls Military Appreciation Resource Fair—Central Church (Ralph Rogers Road) 10:00 am—9:00 pm (CT)

Jan 20—VFW Baseball Annual Meeting—Madison VFW Post Home—10:00 am (CT)

Jan 22—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

Jan 28-29—VFW State Legislative Conference—Pierre

Feb 2—USS South Dakota Commissioning

Feb 6—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 to 8:00 pm (CT)

Feb 8-10—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish

Feb 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)

Feb 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference—Washington, DC

Mar 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)

Mar 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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